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The City in the Islamic World

Volume 1



Edited by

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On the cover: Vertical aerophoto of the two sides of the river and the médinas of Rabat and Salé. Archives of the Ministry of Housing and Urbanism.

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RABAT – SALÉ. HOLY CITIES OF THE TWO BANKS

Saïd Mouline

1. *Introduction*

At the heart of the capital of the Moroccan Kingdom, the Bou Regreg, a river rich in history, divides the agglomeration of Rabat and Salé, winding through the expanse of a magnificent valley of close to four thousand hectares. On both sides, endless landscapes extend as far as the eye can see, over a width of some fifteen kilometres. In this place, the water, the sky, the earth, the plants are animated in a magical orchestration, a source of fascination and emotion.

Human settlements at the mouth of the Bou Regreg—probably since the Phoenicians and the Carthaginians, and certainly since the Roman settlement at Sala Colonia—seem to have faced not the Atlantic Ocean but rather the banks of the river. Some hundred kilometres long, the river reaches the ocean through a substantial bar situated around seven hundred metres from the entrance channel, which runs almost parallel to the coast over a fairly long distance. Because the bar is so shallow, the draught of ships was long limited, up indeed to the beginning of the twentieth century.

Hence, along the length of the Bou Regreg, the medinas of Salé and Rabat have, since the construction of their initial urban nuclei, turned their backs to the sea. Fairly much equal in area, these medinas have, as their respective nuclei, the Banu 'Ashara quarter, built in the eleventh century on the right bank, and the Ribat of 'Abd al-Mu'min, built in 1150 on the left bank. Their presence on the two banks of the river is not limited to the elegant urban skylines they offered in the past. *Borjs*, belvederes, *sqalas*, semaphores, crenellated walls, decorated urban gates, frame the river and embellish it on both of its sides. Further back, the ochre minarets of the Jama' al-'Atiq, of the Jama' al-A'dam and Hassan, built of the same ochre stone, and the curves of the whitened cupolas of the numerous *zawiyas*, accentuate the horizontal contrasts of the buildings, in the past very low, that embrace the smooth foundations of the medinas seen from the riverside.

Thanks to this river, and the respective fluvial ports of these medinas, a maritime destiny was assured, a destiny that made them famous at the time they were created, then, principally, in the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. We often forget that these fluvial ports, established long ago on the Bou Regreg estuary, were the only ones on the Moroccan Atlantic coast never to be subjugated or subject to foreign domination, up to the French Protectorate in 1912. This fluvial port tradition now remains only in the toponymy, with Bab al-Bhar (Sea Gate) on the left bank and Bab Mrisa (Gate of the Small Port) on the right bank. It seems, today, to have been completely erased from the history of the two cities; and this has erased, too, just how much the two cities owe to the river that links them—and, consequently, the river itself, the vector of their history and their historical patrimony.

It is the river that marks the history of a number of highly important monuments in the Bou Regreg valley. Such is the case with Sala Colonia—which later contained the Marinid necropolis of Chellah—with the Qasba of the Oudaya, overhanging the mouth whose entrance it commands, with the Hassan minaret and the Almohad mosque. And it is likewise the case with Bab al-Bhar which led to the Street of Consuls in Rabat, and Bab Mrisa; and with the channel that linked the river to the dockyard within the walls, in the medina of Salé, and so on. More important and meaningful was the imprint of the sacred that these twin cities sealed, through and by virtue of the river.

In the sections that follow, we shall try to sketch this history from a fresh viewpoint: that of a river and of the holy cities on the two banks, devoted to the expansion of Islam, to the glorification of faith, and maritime *jihad*. We shall naturally give particular attention, over the period in question, to monuments, remains, and to the material traces of this sacred imprint, to be seen in the architectural and urban characteristics of the agglomerations at the mouth of the Bou Regreg. In this regard, we must pay homage to those who, like 'Abd al-Mu'min, Ya'qub al-Mansur, Sidi al-Yaburi, Sidi ben Asher, al-Ayyashi, and many others, have contributed to sanctifying the urban entities on the two banks, and to developing faith and piety in this estuary that devoted itself, very early on, to holy war in the furthest Muslim West. We shall also give attention to the relations developed, by the two banks, with al-Andalus: multiple relations whose effects showed through in many fields, and especially in that of the closed universes of dwellings in Rabat and Salé, in their design and their furnishing.

2. *Initial urban nuclei*

2.1 *The left bank: The Qasba of the Oudaya*

From the tenth century on, the site of Rabat was marked by its sacred character, reflected in a *ribat*, then in an Almoravid fortress on the edge of the cliff on the left bank of the Bou Regreg. In this natural defensive position, dominating the estuary from some thirty metres, 'Abd al-Mu'min, the first sovereign of the Almohad dynasty, built, in 1150, a fortress bringing together fighters for the faith, a staging point in the Almohad epic for the expansion of Islam and the conquest of Andalusia. The fortress contained a caliphal residence, a mosque, and reservoirs fed by aqueducts that took in their water from Ain Ghebula. Ramparts of dressed stone, with jutting elements, embraced the irregularities of the cliff, giving it further height and making it still more inaccessible. This construction, which largely corresponds to the present Qasba of the Oudaya, was called Mahdiya, in memory of Mahdi Ibn Tumart, creator of the unitary Almohad doctrine.

A small town of ten hectares or so, a city in miniature, this Almohad fortress, essentially designed to accommodate, around its walls, the assembly of fighters for the faith who were to go and wage a holy war in Spain, was to become the first nucleus of the city of Rabat. It is in the Qasba that is to be found the oldest mosque in Rabat, al-Jama' al-'Atiq (the old mosque), which rises at the highest point of the Qasba and is one of the first Almohad sanctuaries.[1]

'Abd al-Mu'min frequently stayed in this princely residence, where he died in 1163. Between Marrakesh, capital of the Almohad Empire, and the Straits of Gibraltar, the Ribat was essentially a place designed to accommodate, around its walls, the assembly of fighters for the faith who were to go and wage war against the Christians of Spain; a point in the road of *jihad*, which passed by al-Ksar al-Kebir and al-Ksar al-Sghir. It was not until the reign of Ya'qub al-Mansur (1184–1199) that this sacred territory, easily accessible from the south and the north of

[1] Through the centuries, this agglomeration received further, successive designations: the Rabat Fortress, the Salé Citadel, the Qasba, the Palace, the Andalusian Qasba, etc. Its present appellation goes back to 1833, when the sultan Moulay 'Abd al-Rahman expelled the Oudaya tribe from Fez; what remained of this tribe settled in the Qasba, which was then almost uninhabited and has since borne the name of its new inhabitants.

Morocco, at once distinct from and neighbour to the city of Salé on the other bank of the Bou Regreg, would become a grandiose city, starting from the Ribat.

2.2 *The right bank: the Banu 'Ashara quarter*

Seated on a slight eminence of some twenty metres at the mouth of the Bou Regreg, on the right bank and facing its twin city of Rabat, Salé is situated by the side of the sea, turning its back to the Atlantic Ocean; this ocean which rocks it constantly with the murmuring and sounds of its swell, has a mainly decorative value. A maritime city in appearance, sometimes intensely so, Salé has remained land-based and secret, and it has always had a reputation for piety.

This reputation was forged in the eleventh century and truly confirmed from the twelfth, when the whole Bou Regreg estuary region made up a sacred territory dedicated to holy war, a rallying point for volunteers of the faith for *jihad* in Andalusia and a port in constant relation with Seville. The first urban nucleus was formed by Andalusi families—notably that of the Banu 'Ashara, princes of Umayyad origin come from al-Andalus—which settled in Salé during the eleventh century. Major patrons, the Banu 'Ashara proved to be especially generous to the intellectuals, poets and musicians of al-Andalus.[7] In 1121, Ibn Tumart, who later founded the Almohad movement, was accommodated in their palace, of which, however, no trace has been found. From the twelfth century, Salé was to witness a noteworthy urban development, and the first nucleus was to constitute, in the twelfth century, the city's religious pole under the Almohad dynasty: one that would be confirmed, enlarged and embellished under the Marinids in the fourteenth century.

3. *The Almohad epic*

3.1 *The left bank: Ribat al-Fath*

Starting from the Ribat of 'Abd al-Mu'min on the left bank of the Bou Regreg, his grandson Ya'qub al-Mansur, heir to an empire stretching

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[7] Prominent among them were the celebrated secretary Ibn Khazan, the great philosopher and musician Ibn Bajja (Avempace) and his disciple Ibn al-Himara.

from Castille to Tripoli, was to plan a grandiose city, surrounded by imposing walls set with monumental gates and endowed with a gigantic mosque, Hassan, in which a whole army would be able to pray.

At the end of the twelfth century, a substantial surrounding wall was built to protect the south and west faces of the city. It was formed of two long rectilinear walls, intersecting at an acute angle; the total length was more than 5 kilometres, the thickness more than 2 metres, the average height around 8 metres. Thus, an area of about 420 hectares, comprising the high plateau that dominates the Chellah today, was enclosed to assure the security of the lower parts of the city in case of attack.[3]

At the highest point of this wall, Bab al-Ruah, a monumental artistic masterpiece, exhibited, like the gate of the Qasba, a design of intertwined elements around the opening, in the form of a Moorish arch set in a rectangular frame. As with Bab Agnaou in Marrakesh, large arches take up and enlarge the movement of the arch of the gate, encircling it with an aureole of winding acute points, topped with a large frieze of Kufic inscriptions.[4]

Within this surrounding wall, in the northeast part of the city above the river and facing the sea, at a height almost equal to that of the Qasba, Ya'qub al-Mansur ordered the building of a huge mosque that was never in fact to be completed; it would have been one of the greatest sanctuaries of the Muslim world.[5]

Extending over an area of some two-and-a-half hectares, the edifice was laid out in rigorously symmetrical fashion, by reference to a great central axis leading to the *mihrab*. At the other end of this axis, the minaret was inserted in the north façade, jutting on to the interior and exterior of the great courtyard. This was the only minaret in the whole of the Muslim West to occupy such a position. A minaret

[3] Like most of the walls erected by the Almohads, this surrounding structure, built in a very solid concrete rich in lime, has shown admirable resistance. Flanked by regular square towers, its curtain was crowned by a rampart walkway, bordered on the outside by a parapet whose tips were covered with small pyramids. The west rampart was set with four gates, at fairly regular intervals: Bab al-Alou, Bab al-Had, Bab al-Ruah, and the fourth being actually part of the Royal Palace. The south rampart had only one gate, Bab Zaer.

[4] "These Moroccan gates are indisputably among the most beautiful in the world." Henri Terrasse, in *L'art hispano-mauresque des origines au XIIIème siècle*, Publications de l'Institut des Hautes Etudes Marocaines (Paris: Editions G. Van Oest, 1932).

[5] "In the rest of the Muslim world, only the Samarra Mosque in Iraq displayed a more extensive area." (Lévi-Provençal)

of exceptional amplitude,[6] today called the Hassan Tower, it spreads towards the sky a sumptuous decoration, distributed over four faces with distinct compositions.[7]

In 1199, the death of Ya'qub al-Mansur interrupted the works, and his great foundation, Ribat al-Fath—i.e., Victory Camp, in testimony to the success achieved in the holy war against the Christians in Spain—never received the population its walls could have sheltered. The mosque remained unfinished, and its famous minaret, though bereft of its upper part, remains the living symbol of the Almohad's greatest urban project, alongside the works they undertook in the two metropolises of Marrakesh and Seville. The three towers, the Koutoubia, the Giralda, and Hassan light up the Almohad path like beacons, testifying to the same artistic breath that animated the two shores of the Straits of Gibraltar.

3.2 *The right bank: an oriented bi-polar city*

Under the Almohads, Salé was given new ramparts on the north and southeast sides. The façades on the riverside and facing the sea remained open. In 1196, Ya'qub al-Mansur had built a new, quite vast mosque in place of the original one whose roof had collapsed. The Great Mosque is still today called al-Jama' al-A'dam, or Masjid al-Tal'a. This mosque still occupies the same site, but owes its present appearance to the restorations of the eighteenth century. It has a majestic minaret, in sculpted stone, that dominates the skyline of the whole city, and a monumental gate.

Thus, the urban fabric became organized between this religious pole in the northwest, centred around the mosque, and an economic pole in the southeast, centred around the suq and the Qissaria. It is to be noted that the whole urban layout would progressively take its form from the Tal'a quarter, being clearly oriented by reference to the Almohad mosque. In fact, the division into quarters, and, in particular, the layout of the main arteries, is either from east to west, parallel to the *qibla* wall of the Great Mosque (Bab al-Jdid to Bab Sibta, Bab bou Haja to Bab Ferth), or else from north to south (from Sidi ben Achir

[6] With a height of 44 metres and a square section of a little over 16 metres.

[7] It is in fact the most important of the three great Almohad minarets: its dimensions exceed (or at least would have exceeded) those of the two other minarets of Almohad mosques, the Koutoubiya in Marrakesh, and the Giralda in Seville.

to Bab Mrisa, from the north cemetery near Bab Chaf'a to Bab Fès), perpendicular to it. This shows the extent to which the *qibla* wall of the Jama' al-A'dam regulates the urban layout of the town.

In contributing considerably to the urbanization of the mouth of the Bou Regreg, Ya'qub al-Mansur also, for the first time in their history, linked the cities of the two banks, through a removable bridge: a remarkable feat of technology that won him the admiration of his contemporaries.

4. *Marinid rule*

4.1 *The left bank*

From the end of Almohad rule around the mid-thirteenth century up to the beginning of the seventeenth century, the importance of Rabat diminished considerably; only the monuments raised by the Marinids in the fourteenth century bear witness to this period. A case in point is the Jama' al-Kbir, the "Great Mosque," which is today the largest sanctuary in the medina. Near this mosque there remain the traces of a beautiful fountain. A little apart, near Sidi Fatah street, the Hammam al-Jdid, built by the sultan Abu 'Inan, goes back to the same period.[8]

However, the most important monument of this period is the funerary mausoleum of the Marinid dynasty, or Chellah necropolis. On the site of Rabat, dominating the left bank of the Bou Regreg, Chellah displays the majestic remains of the Marinid royal necropolis, enclosing, within its walls, the ruins of Sala Antica. The latter, together with Volubilis, marked the furthest extent of the Roman province of Mauretania Tingitana. Sala is mentioned by ancient authors only from the first century on (Pomponius Mela and Pliny the Elder), but it seems to have been a staging post for the Phoenicians from the seventh century B.C.[9] It is not till the end of the thirteenth century that Sala re-appears (Chellah, in Arabic texts). The Marinid sultan Abu Yusuf Ya'qub

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[8] As with the Arab baths in Andalusia, in Murcia, Xerés, Granada, etc., it comprised, in alignment, the main rooms of Roman baths: rest room, cold room, warm room, and hot room.

[9] In the Mauretanian era (second to first centuries B.C.), the city developed around one of the region's most abundant springs. Reorganized in the Roman era, it was encircled by a wall in 144 A.D. In the fifth century it was abandoned, probably following the Vandal invasion of 429.

(d. 1286) chose this site for the royal necropolis of his dynasty. He built there a mosque and its dependencies, together with mausoleums for his remains and those of his family. In the mid-fourteenth century, his descendant Abu 'l-Hasan enlarged this latter nucleus, encircled it with a wall set with three gates, and built a madrasa with a minaret and a bath. Chellah was accessed through a main gate, facing Bab Zaer in the Rabat wall. It was a beautiful gate made of sandstone, richly decorated, having two towers with cut-off corners, broadened at their top. Inside, a path was laid out, dividing the two hills that formed the site. On the lower side, to the right, were the ancient ruins,[18] and facing them was the Marinid necropolis.

4.2 *The right bank*

Salé, the Castillians' first Moroccan target, was sacked in 1260. The Marinid Ya'qub re-conquered it, then plugged its breaches by reinforcing the ocean side and raising the great gate called Bab al-Mrisa (Gate of the Small Port). During the Marinid period, the defence system was supplemented and consolidated generally, and the city was endowed with numerous monuments. A beautiful wall in stone was raised on the riverside and a maritime dockyard was built, linked to the fluvial port by two channels within the city. Two monumental gates, one of them Bab al-Mrisa to the south, allowed the passage of boats.

Among the most important elements of this period, we should particularly mention the reinforcing of the religious pole of the city: in 1342, the magnificent Abu 'l-Hasan madrasa, regarded as one of the wonders of Marinid art, was completed near the Great Mosque. Although one of the smallest madrasas of the Marinid period, it is worthy of interest from various viewpoints. Adjacent to the Jama' al-A'dam, it has the feature, notable for this type of institution, of revealing

[18] The excavated part of old Salé is organized around the main roadway, the Decumanus Maximus. Here are to be found the main uncovered monuments: shops to the right of the roadway; the main temple of the Roman city and the capitol on the upper terrace; and, at the heart, the forum, laid out in the courtyard of a pre-Roman temple, where was discovered the statue of the last Mauretanian king, Ptolemy, a descendant of Cleopatra, tragically assassinated by Caligula. To the left of the Decumanus Maximus are the public baths, municipal storehouses, the curia, and a nymphaeum fronted by fountains; in the middle of the roadway are the remains of a triumphal arch. The principal roadway of Sala has been followed by means of sample digs carried out in the direction of the ancient port on the Bou Regreg, now silted up. Thus, the Roman city went beyond the Marinid wall, in the direction of the river.

a whole façade, testifying to a judicious architectural composition and urban integration. The monument's graduated portal, next to which a beautiful fountain was built, is assuredly one of the loveliest of its type. It combines, with a rare happiness, a tympanum of stone and a canopy of wood, both sculpted with refinement. The building is centred on an inner courtyard whose small dimensions[11] are forgotten in the exactness of the proportions, the richness and harmony of the decoration and the strength of the thrust towards the sky.

Moreover, a *maristan* (hospital for mental sickness),[12] an aqueduct whose starting point was the springs of Ain Baraka, the building of Zawiyat al-Nussak, a place for receiving learned men, ascetics, the pious, and so on—all these achievements reflect the interest the Marinids took, for close to a century, in Salé and, more generally, in the mouth of the Bou Regreg, where they built the funerary necropolis of their dynasty.

Between the eleventh and the fourteenth centuries, Salé knew real agricultural and commercial prosperity: it imported oil from Seville and exported grain, beeswax, skins, wool, and indigo. According to al-Idrisi, "ships from Seville and all the maritime cities of Andalusia anchored there... [they] took supplies towards the whole of maritime Andalusia."

During this era, illustrious men, theologians, men of learning, scholars, were active, notably Sidi Ahmad ben 'Asher, an interpreter of Shadhili thought and an important Moroccan mystical figure in a fourteenth century already blessed with ample enlightenment. He was one of the venerated saints of the city of Salé and became its patron. His mausoleum is a dominant feature of the splendid marine cemetery which bears his name,[13] and which, at once, extends the religious pole of Salé and divides it from the Atlantic Ocean.

5. *The Bou Regreg Republic*

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the King of Spain, Philip III, issued a series of edicts[14] expelling Muslims from his kingdom; these

[11] Around 32 square metres.
[12] The present-day Funduq Askour.
[13] Of an initial area of some 20 hectares.
[14] Those of 4 August 1609, 3 December 1609, etc.

were known as Andalusians in Morocco and Moriscos in Spain. Among them were the inhabitants of the city of Hornachos, the Hornacheros,[15] who settled at the mouth of the Bou Regreg. They were subsequently joined by other Andalusian refugees, and so it was that, from 1610, the mouth area took in a large population of Muslim refugees driven out from Andalusia and settling and organizing themselves in the cities of the two banks.

In 1627, after numerous ups and downs,[16] the Republic of the Two Banks was proclaimed; and this united New Salé (Rabat) and Old Salé (Salé) for a few decades in a common destiny. "Thanks to the initiative of its inhabitants, and its position allowing it to command the entrance to the river and the port, the Qasba immediately became the capital of the new state."[17] The Bou Regreg estuary then, with the maritime *jihad*, entered the most tumultuous period of its history, became famous for the exploits of its Corsairs, who, as a vanguard of maritime Islam, scoured the Atlantic, showed their colours in British waters, at the mouth of the Thames, in Iceland, proving their prowess in distant and dangerous expeditions, as far as Acadia and Newfoundland.

In the seventeenth, then in the eighteenth centuries, those who came to be known as the "Salé Corsairs" privateered on board light boats of the Mediterranean or Lusitanian type (tartans, brigantines, xebecs, pinques, polacks, caravels, etc.). The most intense period of this activity corresponds to the duration of the Bou Regreg Republic (1627–1666), during which ships' manpower was around forty units. Privateering did in fact exist before Salé, but, according to Jacques Caillé and Roger Coindreau,[18] "it was neither well developed nor truly dangerous." It was not until the first half of the seventeenth century that it became "the veritable 'industry' of the inhabitants of the Bou Regreg Republic."[19]

In contrast to Algiers, Tunis, or Tripoli, which privateered at this time in the Mediterranean, the "Salé Corsairs," in the vanguard of maritime

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[15] A city located in Estramadura, in the province of Badajoz, to the east of Mérida.

[16] Ups and downs resulting from the difficult relations both among the new arrivals themselves, according to their cities of origin, and between them and the inhabitants of Rabat and Salé. See Jacques Caillé, vol. 4, *La République du Bou Regreg*, 205–81.

[17] See Caillé, *La République*, 215.

[18] Roger Coindreau, *Les Corsaires de Salé*, Publications de l'Institut des Hautes Etudes Marocaines, vol. 47 (Paris, 1948).

[19] See Caillé, *La République*, 223–25. "From 1618 to 1626, just 6,000 Christians were captured, and the prize money amounted to more than fifteen million pounds. In ten years, from 1629 to 1639, customs, Moriscos customs, registered the figure of twenty-five or twenty-six million ducats."

Islam, essentially operated in the Atlantic. It was indeed on the vast, perilous ocean that they accomplished their most remarkable exploits. They launched highly dangerous expeditions, reaching Newfoundland, some two thousand miles from their base, and acquired a fearsome reputation, making the Bou Regreg estuary the cradle of holy war.

This period was naturally marked by numerous works and modifications to the urban entities on both banks of the Bou Regreg. The Qasba, mainly occupied by the Hornacheros, saw its surrounding defence set in order, its wall repaired; embrasures were pierced for cannon, houses and baths were built within the walls, along with numerous underground passages for which plans have been successfully established by Jacques Caillé.[20] Wishing to augment their strength and have people they could rely on, the Hornacheros brought further Andalusian refugees into Morocco, settling near the Qasba and in the already inhabited quarter close to the river. Thus, as the ribat of 'Abd al-Mu'min had been at the origin of Ribat al-Fath, so the Hornacheros' Qasba was to give birth to the Andalusian city of Rabat.

"The history of Morocco has preserved the memory of the 'Salé Corsairs.' However, this term may be confusing, leading us to believe the pirates lived in the present city of Salé. It is explained by the fact that, in the 17th century, the name Rabat was not known, only that of Salé: New Salé and Old Salé. In reality, the inhabitants of Old Salé remained strangers to piracy, whose instigators were the Moriscos who were settled on the left bank of the Bou Regreg…and who regarded this activity as one of the forms of holy war."[21] History, likewise, preserves the memory of a tumultuous port that bears, more than others, the marks of European civilization.

6. *Urban identities and specificities*

6.1 *The left bank: from Andalusian city to imperial residence*

In Rabat, the Andalusian city was to occupy a part of the interior within the Almohad surrounding wall: an urban area of some hundred hectares, including the Marinid elements and delimited to the southeast by the construction of a new wall. Beginning close to Bab al-Had, this

[20] See Caillé, *La République*, 214.
[21] See Caillé, *La République*, 224–226.

Andalusian wall links the twelfth-century curtain to the cliff dominating the Bou Regreg, where Borj Sidi Makhlouf is located.[22] Thus the broad lines of the city on the left bank or the medina of Rabat, sketched in the twelfth, then in the fourteenth century, truly took shape in the seventeenth century. During this period its opening to the maritime part of the river became confirmed, and this orientation remains evident in its urban framework defined by two main perpendicular arteries: the Street of Consuls running alongside the river, which constituted the city's economic pole, and Souiqa Street, a main axis running alongside the Great Mosque in the fourteenth century and linking Bab al-Had to the Street of Consuls, then to Bab al-Bhar, or the Sea Gate, which opens on to the fluvial port.

The Street of Consuls, in view of its location between the Qasba and the fluvial port, is certainly one of the oldest arteries of the city and would play an important role in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The progressive opening up to Europe was demonstrated in this street's cosmopolitan ambiance, vibrant as it was with the rhythm of the fluvial port's activities. The agents in question, while concerned to protect the interests of their nationals, also played a political role: their governments charged them with negotiating and paying ransoms for the liberation of captives. The Street of Consuls would progressively become inhabited by the representatives of many foreign nations. First the legations of Sweden, Denmark, Holland, and France; then would come the representatives of England, Spain and Portugal, then those of Italy, Austria-Hungary, Germany, the United States, etc.

Between the taking of the estuary in 1666 by Moulay al-Rashid, founding father of the Alawi dynasty, and the beginning of the twentieth century, Rabat witnessed substantial changes. While these did not affect the urban framework of the medina, the extensions and new monuments set in place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries progressively gave it another major character, that of imperial residence. Initially, under the first Alawi sovereigns up to Moulay Sliman at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the city remained dedicated to its privateering activities. This explains the interest taken in the Qasba which had become a *makhzan* fortress, and the numerous constructions

[22] Rectilinear and flanked by towers, the Andalusian wall, which extended for more than 1,400 metres, had an average height of 5 metres and a width of more than a metre and a half. It was set with three gates: Bab al-Tben, Bab al-Bououiba, and Bab Chellah.

and modifications set in place there, and the work of maritime defence undertaken throughout this period. On the other hand, the construction by Sidi Muhammad ben 'Abd Allah, around the end of the eighteenth century, of a palace and a great mosque in the southwest part of the Almohad enclosure underlined the importance attributed to it by sovereigns.

During the reign of Moulay Sliman, this new character of the city was still further confirmed. Indeed, this sovereign had a palace built by the side of the sea, called Dar al-Bahr,[23] and a number of sanctuaries, including the mosque sited at the corner of Bouiba and Souiqa streets, which bears his name. He restored Bab al-Had and Bab Chellah, and ordered the construction of a *millah* (Jewish quarter) at the eastern end of the medina, on land occupied up till then by the last great orchards within the walls of the Andalusian city. In addition, at the beginning of the nineteenth century probably, an external rampart of a total length of 4,300 metres was built. It extended the Almohad enclosure to the south and doubled it in the west as far as the Atlantic, so enclosing an area of more than 840 hectares. Then, in the second half of the nineteenth century, Sidi Muhammad ben 'Abd al-Rahman completed the construction of a new palace in the southwest part of the Almohad enclosure and consequently revived the small imperial town previously created in the same place.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Rabat took on a new face, forming just a single agglomeration. Even though the population was still concentrated in the medina, within the Andalusian wall, the monuments built in the space delimited by the Almohad wall marked the imperial residential character acquired by the city from that moment on.

6.2 *The right bank*

Up to the beginning of the twentieth century, Salé continued strongly to bear the imprint of a pious city: in the layout of the city, as seen above, but likewise in the number, nature and specific features of building or social tradition that had been preserved. The city has in fact sixty mosques, near which were *msids*, or Quranic schools.[24] It has some forty saints, whose *zawiyas* were sited within or without the walls, and

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[23] Now disappeared.

[24] Among the main ones, and in addition to those mentioned, there is the Mosque of Sidi Ahmad Hajj, the Shahba Mosque, the Zanqa Mosque, that of Sidi al-Hajj 'Abd Allah, those of the Hajjamin, Semmarin, Guezzarin, etc.

twenty-four public fountains, more than half of which still constantly provided water.

In 1918, the city, which covered almost half of the area enclosed by the walls,[25] was divided into a dozen quarters.[26] It contained a population of around 17,000 people, around ten per cent of them Jewish. The substantial extent of this Jewish population goes back to the exodus provoked by the Inquisition in Spain. The Jewish population of Salé had settled near Bab Hsaien, in the Millah al-Qdim quarter. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the sultan Moulay Sliman had a *millah* built to the southwest of the city; it was a new quarter, marked out from others by the regular way it was laid out. The Jewish cemetery was outside the city, and, in 1918, the Jewish population of Salé was headed by the rabbi Raphael Angora, one of the best known authorities of the Jewish community in Morocco.[27]

Salé remained one of the main intellectual centres in Morocco. The intellectual movement which had reached its peak during the Marinid[28] period was prolonged, notably through the magisterial work of a high-ranking Salé functionary from the Makhzan named Ahmed ben Khalid al-Naciri, an important witness to nineteenth-century Morocco and author of *Al-Istiqsa*, the last major compilation of the Muslim history of Morocco. Finally, Salé is the only city in the whole of Morocco to have kept alive the "procession of candles," celebrated there annually in commemoration of the Prophet's birth.[29] On the eve of the Mouloud, a procession is formed near Dar Chakroun, where, each year, imposing candelabras are restored, whose sides are finely hung with thousands of tiny wax motifs in the most various colours. Dressed in their glittering outfits, the Salé boatmen bear the seven decorated candles that are the chief ornaments of the procession. The procession is accompanied by music, along a route that passes, notably, by the Sidi Ahmad Hajj

[25] As can be seen from the aerial views of the time. Between this urbanized zone and the wall, there were mainly *zawias*, orchards, and agricultural land.

[26] Among the main ones we may mention La Tal'a, Ras al-Shajra, Blida, al-Guezzarin, al-Millah al-Qdim, al-Soff, al-Souiqa, etc.

[27] The same decision had been taken in Rabat, where the new *millah* had been built on the southeast edge of the medina.

[28] It was the period when illustrious men, such as Lisan al-Din ibn al-Khatib, came to make a stay in Salé and sought an audience with Sidi ben Acher.

[29] This very popular and attractive custom had been introduced to Morocco at the end of the sixteenth century on the initiative of the Sa'di sultan Ahmad al-Mansur al-Dahbi, who had links with the Sublime Porte. At that time, it was celebrated in the capital, Marrakesh, and in numerous towns in Morocco.

mausoleum, the Great Suq and the Great Mosque, before reaching the sanctuary of Sidi 'Abd Allah ben Hassun, where the most beautiful candle is placed at the centre of the cupola dominating the catafalque. Still today, this urban procession, experienced as the central moment of a great religious feast, marks, throughout its route, the principal moments and monuments attesting to the faith and piety that have characterized the history of the Salé medina.

7. *Spatial configuration and social organization*

Analysis of the plan of Rabat's medina leads to a distinction between a central zone on the one hand, and, on the other, peripheral quarters located to the west, north, and east sides of the medina. In the central zone, access ways (streets, alleys, *derbs*) exhibit an irregular layout, while the residential zones, in enclosed wholes, are made up of urban blocks grouped around major residences. In the peripheral quarters, al-Gza, Sidi Fateh, al-Alou and above all the Millah, land division takes the form of a regular layout made up of a central axis from whose two sides perpendicular and parallel streets service blocks of a width of two parcels. The religious monuments erected in Rabat under the Alawi dynasty, from the seventeenth to the beginning of the twentieth century, constitute, by virtue of their number, an imposing architectural array.[30]

In the Salé medina, whose main orientations have been noted above, the religious pole is framed by major residences, some with *riads*, by numerous dependencies and even by private cemeteries. The residential quarters surrounding the economic pole are of a smaller size and are often more modest. Aerial views from the beginning of the century show how, between the central urbanized zone and the walls, there were mainly *sanias*, orchards, and agricultural land. Among the main residential quarters were La Tal'a, Ras al-Shajra, Blida, al-Guezzarin, al-Millah al-Qdim, al-Soff, al-Souiqa, etc.

In both cities, the residential zones and quarters, of variable size, comprise neighbouring units within the urban whole. Each quarter has

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[30] In 1906, there were, in Rabat, 6 cathedral mosques, 33 secondary mosques, and 13 *zawiyas*, most of them built during the time of the Alawi sovereigns. See Caillé, *La République*, 457.

collective services for the provision of residents' daily needs: bread oven, Quranic school, fountain, and small trades, plus, in a wider ring, concentric or not, a district mosque, a *zawiya*, a *hammam*, etc. In the medinas of Rabat and Salé, the quarter may not always have been distinct as a single physical entity, but it formed a social unity, or *huma*, essentially brought about by a community of interest between inhabitants. Each *huma* had a certain number of *derbs*, which constituted the fundamental social spaces of the medina. The *derb* was structured from the residence sited at the end of a cul-de-sac linked to a family of notables from which it often took its name. From the heart of the *derb* to its end, the two sides were lined with a certain number of houses reflecting kinship relations or client relations with the families owning them.

The difference in scale, atmosphere, and function to be observed between residential quarters and the great commercial arteries stems from a fundamental difference in architectural layout. The road networks crossing the suqs were delimited by organic structures built in linear series and opening on to the public space. The alleys and cul-de-sacs of the residential quarters were determined by the blind perimeters of organic structures built with a central courtyard. In this type of organization, the *derb* thus constituted a first degree of spacing, part of a larger mechanism whereby residential units were isolated vis-à-vis the exterior. This is a mode of grouping to be observed fairly generally in the urban fabrics of Arab-Muslim cities.

8. *The universe of houses in Rabat and Salé*

On the architectural level, each unit of residence was organized around a central courtyard; this was the focal space, the true nucleus from which and around which all the houses' constituent elements combined to form a spatial unit. The most prosperous residences were developed around a courtyard of large dimensions; they might indeed have two or more courtyards, including private gardens, a *hammam*, a stable, plus lodging for guests, servants, etc. We may likewise note, in Rabat and Salé, a large number of *menzehs* on the terraces. Largely open on one or more sides, and providing a panoramic urban view (without, though, allowing any glimpse at neighbouring courtyards), the *menzeh* was a leisure space where the master of the house could receive at the end of the afternoon. Often adorned by a central basin or mural fountain, the courtyard was generally bordered by a gallery which could be partially or totally doubled on the first floor.

The construction systems and the materials used, similar in Rabat and Salé,[31] played their part in giving houses analogous volumetric compositions. This was the case, too, with the dimensions of the inner courtyards, the habitation rooms surrounding them, the types of galleries, and the lambrequin or festoon arches that bordered the galleries or accentuated the entrances to the main rooms. The use of stone[32] made it possible, in both cities, to build on fairly thin walls, to achieve light and elegant porticos and to use slender stone columns. This gave slim, light and even audacious proportions to porticos: in contrast, for instance, to the residences of Fez or Marrakesh, where pillars of a height of two metres often had diameters of 50 or 60 centimetres, while in Rabat or Salé it was common to see columns of 25 or 30 centimetres in diameter rise to a height of 3 or 4 metres. The stone adorning the galleries and entrances to rooms was entirely sculpted before being laid, even if designed for a complicated arcade. In Rabat and Salé, the mason was also a stone-cutter and a sculptor. He prepared his work on the ground, stone by stone, by composing it horizontally, before it was constituted on an improvised arch on the work site. Moreover, in Rabat and Salé, as in other coastal cities, the doors giving on to the streets were often adorned with frames in stone, made up of two pilasters topped by an archivolt, a design which was probably alien to Muslim art. We may also note the phalloid form of knockers in wrought iron or copper.[33]

The Moorish elements marking out residences in Rabat and Salé are especially to be found in the nature and division of decoration. This influence appears in the entrance doors adorned by designs borrowed from Spain, and also in the *setwans*, long arched vestibules leading to the inner courtyard. In the latter, the overall decoration—marble-squared floors, chiselled plaster, carved wooden ceiling—supplies a perspective ending on a central panel of *zellīj*, the *shuwwāf*, notably displayed on the corner of the hallway, which runs throughout its length between two rows of benches interspersed with columns topped by lambrequin arches.

[31] See the chapter, "Particularités des maisons de Rabat," in Jean Gallotti, *Le Jardin et la maison arabes au Maroc* (Paris: Editions Albert Levy, 1926), vol. 2.

[32] There are numerous quarries in the plateau where the Bou Regreg has hollowed out its broad estuary: quarries of a smooth ochred limestone, easy to cut and to bake.

[33] See P. Ricard and A. Delpy, "Note au sujet de vieilles portes marocaines," *Hespéris* 15, 2nd trimester (1932), fasc. 1.

This influence also appears in the layout and design of the inner courtyard, whose symmetrical composition makes openings harmonious and gives rise to a succession of stone-cut arches along the gallery: large median lambrequin arches between two smaller festoon arches. The inversion of these forms in the gallery on the first floor makes its contribution to an overall elegance, balance and harmony. Marble, cut stone, sculpted plaster, wrought iron, painted carved wood, *zellij*, are deployed on the courtyard's ground and façades; and these, by the richness and refinement of their execution, give the house its true status.[34]

Furniture is essentially made up of thick and comfortable couches, topped by cushions and encircling each room. The Moorish influence is also very evident in the sumptuous silk embroideries specific to Rabat and Salé. Original in their designs and their colours, they give the cushions, drapes and curtains the happy harmony possessed by the interiors of traditional residences in the two cities. It is quite clear that the Andalusians who settled the Qasba, in Rabat or Salé, preserved their art and their skill in the new forms of urbanism to which arranged spaces lent themselves. It was thus possible for certain of their practices to endure and develop, such as gardening, irrigation by waterwheels (*anat* and *jnanat*), the growing of new varieties of fruits,[35] artistic shoemaking, tapestry, the art of binding, furniture of the Spanish Renaissance and baroque styles, with their succession of canopied beds and small cabled columns, together with the Andalusian music known as Gharnati (i.e., from Granada); even family names still reflect this Spanish origin.[36]

[34] See Saïd Mouline, "Trois demeures de Rabat: Dâr Caïd Souissi, dâr Reghaye et dâr Hassani," in *L'habitat traditionnel dans les pays musulmans autour de la Méditerranée*, vol. 1, *L'héritage architectural: formes et fonctions*, Groupe de Recherches et d'Etudes sur le Proche-Orient (Cairo: Publications de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1988), 243–63.

[35] Among them the famous grapes of Rabat-Salé. "The inhabitants [of the two cities] ... are especially gifted in the culture of vines and produce every variety of table grape. They are so passionate about them, and such connoisseurs, that they produce them in their homes. In fact, the majority of houses have climbing vines ... The grapes are very light and sweet especially the varieties called 'silky' (*harir*). Their juice is highly refined and was, in the past, exported to Andalusia. Even the Muscat variety is a specialty of the cities of the two banks ..." M. Ben Ali Doukkali, trans. Halima Ferhat, quoted by Hamid Triki in *Itinéraire Culturel des Almoravides et des Almohades. Maghreb et Péninsule Ibérique*, published by the foundation *El legado andalusí* (March 1999), 137.

[36] Such as, for instance, the families Pirou, Tredano, Bargach, Balafrej, Mouline, etc., in Rabat, and the families Znibar, Fennich, Brital, Al-Krombi, A'mar, etc., in Salé.

9. *Conclusion*

The urban and architectural patrimony stems from the work of builders, from the distinctive local art, and from social, cultural, historical, ecological, and other relations, multiple and differentiated; but this comes not from a single source, rather from a number of sources and a multitude of exchanges. Hence, in the long run, the patrimony is the result of multiple determining factors, the fruit of a cultural crossbreeding, or rather—to avoid any pejorative connotations that might be attached to this last term—the outcome of "cross-fertilization."

In his remarkable work devoted to the Mediterranean, Fernand Braudel writes that "civilizations are firmly attached to a geographical space and find, in their confrontation, their raison-d'être." It is this viewpoint of confrontation as a motor of evolution in civilizations that interests us here, with specific reference to the historical evolution of the holy cities on the two banks of the Bou Regreg. It is of interest to us since the urban and architectural patrimony, at once a product and a factor of civilization, bears witness to exchanges, ruptures, changes that are displayed, placed, and archived within time. We might almost say they form strata and sediments within time, and so forge unique sites and urban landscapes.

It is this unique character, resulting from a particular ambiance and atmosphere, that is remarkably reflected in the 1918 description of the estuary and the cities of the two banks by Jérome and Jean Tharaud, who had been invited by Hubert Lyautey, Resident-General of the French Protectorate in the Sharifi Kingdom since 1912: "At the mouth of a slow African river, where the sea enters broadly in long billows fringed with foam, two prodigious white cities, two cities from the *Thousand and One Nights*, Rabat al-Fath, the Camp of Victory, and Barbary Salé, send back, from one bank to the other, like two stanzas from the same poem, their whiteness and their terraces, their minarets and their gardens, their walls, their towers, their great cemeteries like Breton lands, like huge carpets of grey stone spread out by the side of the sea. Further on, further up the river, in the midst of red lands and itself red, rises the high square tower of a vanished mosque. Still further on, a further city, or rather the ramparts of a ruined fortress, which is now a mere dream, a memory of stone in a grove of orange trees. And from Rabat the white to white Salé, over the river's broad estuary, from the solitary tower of Hassan in Chellah the mysterious, there is, from dawn to dusk, a slow coming and going of storks, which,

through the course of their flight, link with an invisible thread these three cities of Islam gathered in a narrow space, this whiteness, this greenness, these waters."

> Is it my imagination or is it my eyes that see in this place one of the loveliest spots in the world? As with the great birds, my gaze falls on all of these dispersed beauties, one by one, without ever growing weary.[37]

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[37] Jérome and Jean Tharaud, *Rabat ou les heures marocaines* (Paris: Emile-Paul Frères, 1928), 4, 5.